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It is the fall semester in a small mid-western city where the leaves turn red and gold, and oscillate slowly in the soft winter wind.

Mrs. Joy[1] receives a phone call from the school secretary that she will have a new student in her English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. She has taught ESL students for years and received many such calls, but Mrs. Joy notices the secretary's frantic tone which indicates that this student is unique. When the principal opens the door and introduces the new student to her, she sees a little ten-year-old nervous boy who keeps staring at his feet. He looks lost and tired. The principal introduces him, "Mrs. Joy, this is Carlos." Mrs. Joy smiles, "Hi, Carlos. How are you?" Without looking up, the boy murmurs something in Spanish. The principal tells Mrs. Joy that Carlos is from Mexico, and that he arrived in the United States a few days ago. Mrs. Joy grabs a screening test to determine Carlos' English proficiency and finds out that he knows little English. "Even basic vocabulary, like table, pencil, chair. He doesn't know any of that. I asked him a question and he responded in Spanish. So, he came with no English," narrates Mrs. Joy.

Mrs. Joy is frustrated. She has to come up with a plan to help Carlos learn English and academic content as quickly as possible. As she strategizes, she misses Nyein, a little girl who moved to another school. Mrs. Joy invested her time, energy, and concentration to help Nyein learn English successfully. Will she teach Carlos similarly to how she taught Nyein? Will Carlos learn English quickly? Will she be able to help him? This paper attempts to document the journey of how Mrs. Joy teaches Carlos, an "emergent bilingual" (García, 2009).

Emergent Bilinguals in the United States

In the United States, schools have increasingly enrolled students who speak languages other than English (García & Kleifgen, 2010). Policymakers, legislators, and the federal government have used the terms English Language Learners (ELLs) or Limited English Proficient (LEP) to refer to these students (Crawford, 2004). These two terms are commonly used to refer to students who speak languages other than English at home and who have not yet mastered adequate proficiency in English to meet state standards and excel in English-speaking classrooms (García & Kleifgen, 2010). García (2009) argued that the terms ELL and LEP were inherently problematic because they create negative connotations for these students and limited the discussion of equity in their teaching.

As a result, García (2009) proposed the term "emergent bilinguals" to describe this student population. She argued that, "the

term emergent bilinguals refers to the children's potential in developing their bilingualism; it does not suggest a limitation or a problem in comparison to those who speak English" (p. 322). Many emergent bilinguals were born in the United States after their families emigrated from other countries, and many of them were relocated from refugee camps (Samway & McKeon, 2007). These emergent bilinguals typically enter schools with a wide range of languages, educational backgrounds, ages, and socioeconomic statuses (Boyson & Short, 2003). Regardless of their statuses, these students need to rapidly develop English proficiency, content knowledge, and familiarity with school routines in order to be successful in American schools (Short, 2000).

During my visits at schools in the United States, I have met a great number of emergent bilinguals, especially those who have recently arrived in the United States. These students have never been exposed to the English-speaking environment. As a result, administrators, teachers, and staff members have difficulty communicating with and supporting these students (Szente, Hoot, & Taylor, 2006). This frustrating situation affects ELLs' academic, social, and intellectual development (Rong & Preissle, 2009).

The question of how to teach emergent bilinguals has been widely researched. A review of literature indicates that there are a number of publications about the topic (e.g., Barr, Eslami, & Joshi, 2012; Colombo, 2012; Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2008; Helfrich & Bosh, 2011), but few are specific to students who arrive at school as emergent bilinguals. This circumstance has been reported as challenging by many teachers (Khong & Saito, 2014). In order to learn how to teach emergent bilinguals, a study of a teacher's experience is legitimate. By studying the ways of teachers who have taught these students, teachers and educators will be able to learn applied practices to use when teaching emergent bilinguals themselves. Therefore, I have explored the journey of a teacher who has gone through the process of teaching emergent bilinguals. In this paper I begin by reviewing scripted instruction, a current practice which is increasingly being implemented to educate emergent bilinguals.

Scripted Instruction for Emergent Bilinguals

Many school districts in the United States have adopted scripted instruction programs for emergent bilinguals in an attempt to raise standardized testing scores in order to avoid being labeled as "failing" according to the No Child Left Behind Act (Reeves, 2010). Scripted instruction directs teachers to teach, talk, and manage classrooms based on predetermined scripts. The underlying learning theory of scripted instruction is based on behaviorism, where learning takes place through a formation of habits through repetition and reinforcement. In the scripted instruction program, creativity is discouraged; teachers are instructed to follow the scripts strictly to avoid any interference in students' achievement (Reeves, 2010).

After the scripted instruction program was implemented in many states, debates about its effectiveness were widely researched. Opponents criticized scripted instruction as an "insult to the talents and professional abilities of teachers" (Milosovic, 2007, p. 29) in that it turns "teachers into script readers" (Sawyer, 2004). Although prior research has documented increased emergent bilinguals'

learning achievement when scripted instruction was used, critics argued that it developed only lower-order skills (Duncan-Owen, 2009; Sawyer, 2004). However, advocates of scripted instruction argued that scripted instruction has its place for novice teachers. Reeves (2010) pointed out that scripted instruction is a catalyst to help beginning teachers learn to teach because they perceive the scripted curriculum as an expert and a mediated tool to help them figure out how to teach.

Based on debate about the scripted instruction method, it is evident that its benefits remain controversial. At first glance, it seems that scripted instruction has a place as a starting point in the education of emergent bilinguals, yet little is known about how teachers use scripted instruction in the context of teaching emergent bilinguals. Accordingly, apart from investigating teaching practices for emergent bilinguals in general, this investigation includes a look at how an experienced teacher implemented scripted instruction. The research question which guided this study was: What are the teaching practices of an ESL teacher who has taught emergent bilinguals?

The Study

Ethnographic Vulnerability as Theoretical Perspective

Behar (1996) advocated vulnerable observation, encouraging ethnographers to include personal and emotional voice in ethnography in order to increase intellectual understanding. She encouraged ethnographers to write vulnerably and address their subjectivity. Vulnerability in developing relationships is about being open, emphatic, and embracing. She argued that, "*what happens within the observer* must be made known [emphasis original]" (p. 6). By acknowledging their own subjectivity, ethnographers achieve a significant form of objectivity which no other form of science provides. Ethnographers use this type of objectivity to serve as a rudder which guides readers to and through the tunnel of ethnographic work. As readers take the journey with researchers, they come to know the participants, the researchers, and themselves (Behar, 1996).

Research Methodology

I employed a *collaborative ethnographic case study* approach, which is a combination between a collaborative ethnography and a case study. Lassiter (2005) defined collaborative ethnography as a type of inquiry that operates under a collaborative paradigm between two or more people throughout an ethnographic process including, but not limited to, conceptualizing, collecting, analyzing, and writing about a particular culture over a period of time. In this study, I invited the participant to actively collaborate and to co-construct knowledge about how to teach emergent bilinguals. I examined her classroom culture, a complicated web of symbols, patterns, habits, rituals, expectations, and beliefs that were dynamic and consistently changing through space and time (Heath & Street, 2008).

I integrated the case study approach with collaborative ethnography and defined the case as teaching practices for emergent bilinguals in an elementary school level. I purposefully chose the Sunshine School, where Mrs. Joy had been working, as a site to conduct this study.

Going to Sunshine School [2]

On a Thursday morning I drive to the Sunshine School to meet with Mrs. Joy. The elementary school is part of the Rocky District, where 31 schools serve

approximately 20,382 students. The data from the District website shows that 23.6% of these students are emergent bilinguals, and most of the students are Hispanic (59%) and White (35%). For the past ten years, the Rocky District has struggled with under-achievement in students' learning performance and severe drop out rates. To address these crises, the District required all schools to use the same structured and scripted curricula and standardized assessments.

I search Google for the Sunshine School's address and find that it is not difficult to travel to this school. I drive past stores, restaurants, and parks. After driving on the main road for ten minutes from my apartment, I turn right onto a medium size road and take the second left onto a smaller one. To the left, the Sunshine School sits quietly in a lovely, safe, and shady neighborhood, in harmony with the neighboring houses. I pull my car into over at the parking lot, pick up grab my bag, and walk toward the school building.

The school is one-story, small, brownish, brick building with a welcoming atmosphere. Above the school entrance, a green sign waves and catches my attention, "The best students in the WORLD are studying here." To me, this message shows that the school's educators emphasize academic excellence and set high expectations for students. After I push the door and enter the building, I see a small white sign on the doors which says, "Welcome parents and visitors to your school." The word "your" is underlined, perhaps because educators at the school want to encourage community and parents' involvement. The school also provides newsletters and messages for parents in both Spanish and English.

I head to the principal's office and tell a school receptionist that I have an appointment with Mrs. Joy. She asks me to sign in on the Visitor's Sheet. As I sign up, I glimpse an attendance board to my right. The board reads, "Our goal is to get attendance 98% each day." At first I doubt, "How can they do that? Is it realistic?" However, the statistics on the board show that the school has been achieving this mission for days. On the board, I see Monday 98%, Tuesday 98%, Wednesday 99%, and today 99%. I find this incredible! Later, when I ask Mrs. Joy about this high-rate of attendance, she shows me a weekly email, sent by an assistant principal, which indicates the school has been achieving this goal for weeks, with 100% attendance for many of the classes.

The receptionist directs me to Mrs. Joy's classroom, which is located in a portable classroom outside of the main school building. I stick a visitor's badge on my shirt, exit through the door, and keep walking until I see Mrs. Joy's name on the portable's door. I climb the stairs, peek through the classroom door, and see Mrs. Joy working in front of the computer. I push the door open and greet Mrs. Joy with a big smile.

Meeting with Mrs. Joy

When I say hello, Mrs. Joy looks up from the computer and walks to hug me. I first met her while I was pursuing my doctoral studies in the United States. At the time this study was conducted, Mrs. Joy was also a doctoral student at the same university. I particularly chose Mrs. Joy because she was willing to participate, hospitable, and could lend great understanding to my study (Stake, 1995). At the time of the study Mrs. Joy had four emergent bilinguals in her classroom.

Mrs. Joy is a native born citizen of the United States. At this visit, she is dressed in black pants and a lavender printed singlet covered by black blazer. She is in her mid-forties and always smiling. Mrs. Joy uses American Sign Language (ASL) fluently. She often tells her students that she speaks little Spanish. Mrs. Joy may schedule time to meet one on one with emergent bilinguals, using an ESL pullout model. She pulls students out of their mainstream classrooms, works with them in a separate classroom, and returns them back to their original classroom.

Data Collection

I employed three types of data elicitation techniques to answer the research question: participant observations, interviews, and artifact collections (Wolcott, 1995). Over a five-month period, on different weekdays to gain a variety of data, I conducted 40 hours of participant observations in Mrs. Joy's classroom. This time included instructions, testing sessions, and her playground duties.

Throughout the data collection process, I fell on the continuum between observer and participant observer. At the beginning of the study, my role was that of observer as I figured out how to participate in the classroom. Gradually, I found ways to help Mrs. Joy by delivering handouts, walking around to answer students' questions, being her teaching materials, and teaching the students myself. Experiences on the continuum of observer and participant observer helped me understand the complexity of Mrs. Joy's teaching context.

During the participant observation, I used a small notebook to take notes on classroom interaction, language, and classroom sequence so I would not distract the students by my note taking. My notes consisted of keywords, phrases, conversations, pictures, and hunches. At times, I asked Mrs. Joy to explain her actions. As quickly as I could after each observation, I wrote down my hunches in a researcher's journal and expanded my field notes with details (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). This immediate field note expansion helped me "recreate" my memory and experience of being in the site. It should be noted that my expanded field notes were not a mirror of what I saw; rather the notes were recreations to my experiences (Emerson et al., 1995). After each observation, I sent an email to Mrs. Joy to ask related questions for clarification.

Simultaneous to the participant observations, I gathered artifacts such as classroom handouts, school websites, newsletters, and curricula. At times, I wrote notes on the informal conversations Mrs. Joy and I had about her teaching practices and stories about the students. After observing for a while, I generated interview questions to elicit another layer of the data from Mrs. Joy. The interview was semi-structured and she shared her perspectives about her teaching practices, teaching philosophy, teaching strategies, and lesson planning. After I interviewed Mrs. Joy, I decided to interview a student teacher and a gifted education teacher, who have worked closely with Mrs. Joy. These two informants were selected because they were rich data sources who could help me understand Mrs. Joy's teaching practices.

Since I employed a collaborative ethnographic case study design, Mrs. Joy and I were both actively engaged and shared throughout this research project. I invited Mrs. Joy to reflect on her feelings about being a research participant and about her teaching practices. She continually wrote reflections and sent them

to me via email weekly. After I expanded my field notes, I shared them with Mrs. Joy. Mrs. Joy also sent me her reflection each week. The file notes became a way for us to reflect, communicate, and collaborate with one another.

Data Analysis

The data set in this study includes field notes from 40 hours of participant observations, notes from informal conversations, interview transcripts, artifacts, and Mrs. Joy's written reflections. I conducted the data analysis as if I were a detective solving a crime. The goal of data analysis is to find an "aha" moment that significantly contributes to the field (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 39). Influenced by the theoretical lens of ethnographic vulnerability (Behar, 1996), I attempted to be aware of my subjectivity while analyzing the data. Throughout the data analysis process, I was actively focused and engaged in coding the data, reviewing the literature, writing conceptual memos, comparing the data with the literature, and waiting for the themes to emerge (Emerson et al., 2011; Heath & Street, 2008). After themes emerged, I used them to create a story about the journey of teaching emergent bilinguals. To increase the trustworthiness of this study, triangulation and member check techniques were used (Merriam, 2009).

Researcher's Stance

In any qualitative research, a researcher is a primary instrument (Merriam, 2009) and I consider it vital to disclose my background. I was born and raised in Thailand, and I always envisioned myself learning English, which I started when I was 10 years old (Grade 11). I was excited to learn English because it seemed sophisticated to learn a new language. I vividly remember times I sang the ABC song, memorized new words, and tried to understand unfamiliar grammar. I struggled to learn English, but I enjoyed the learning because I had a history of success.

After finishing high school, I decided to pursue a Bachelor's Degree in English because I wanted to be an English teacher. After graduation, I pursued a Master's Degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) while teaching English at a high school. As a teacher, I am an advocate for best practices in teaching. After teaching for a while, I resigned my position to take a scholarship to pursue doctoral study in Educational Studies (Bilingual, Multicultural, and ESL Education) in the United States. The longer I studied in my program, the more I saw myself reflected in emergent bilinguals. I connected to emergent bilinguals because I understand how difficult it is to learn English.

Ethical Considerations

To make ethical decisions throughout this study, I honored the values in procedural ethics (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) held by my institution's Institutional Review Board: beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, justice, and fidelity. Additionally, I took a stance of relational ethics (Ellis, 2007), because procedural ethics alone do not guarantee that research is ethical. To elaborate, relational ethics value relationships, mutual rapport, respect, trust, and intimacy between the researcher and the researched. I use these values to justify decisions made in ethical dilemmas (Ellis, 2007). I ask myself, "Does my decision help or hurt our relationship?" I choose the decision that is more helpful than hurtful. For example, since this study focuses on teaching practices of a teacher, I avoided detailed descriptions of the characteristics of the students. However, I had to include the students in the findings,

because teaching is an interaction between the teacher and the students.

Findings

Teaching emergent bilinguals is complicated, time-consuming, and requires flexibility and improvisation. The data showed that Mrs. Joy invested her energy, knowledge, and time to help her emergent bilingual students acculturate into U.S. classrooms and become academically successful. In this section, I use the "ethnographic present" approach to describe Mrs. Joy's teaching practices in detail, to paint a portrait which portrays the complexity of teaching this group (Heath & Street, 2008).

September

Welcome to Mrs. Joy's classroom. It is in late September at Mrs. Joy's classroom…

There is a small green chalkboard in front of the room which is connected to a larger white board. A world map is folded above the chalkboard. Students' desks are arranged in a U-shape in the middle of the classroom.

It is Mrs. Joy's first class with Carlos. Mrs. Joy is a part-time teacher, and the school gives her a morning work schedule so that she can pursue her doctoral studies in the afternoon. Mrs. Joy allocates time to meet with the students based on her professional judgment. She starts her day with "the boys" group. After teaching the boys, Mrs. Joy meets with Carlos, and next pulls out Javier and the first graders to teach them oral language. She finishes her day with Carlos and his writing group.

Making connections is important. Carlos arrives in class at 9:30 a.m. and sits down at a table in the back. He looks tired and overwhelmed. Mrs. Joy says hello to him, but Carlos does not respond. Mrs. Joy changes from speaking English to Spanish, and he mumbles a barely audible response. After that, Mrs. Joy gives him a folder and asks him to take out the materials inside.

I observe this interaction from a distance, taking notes at the table next to Carlos. Mrs. Joy asks Carlos to say after her, "Today is September 27, 2013." Carlos repeats her. Then, she writes the sentence down on a piece of paper and asks Carlos to copy it. When Carlos finishes writing, Mrs. Joy continues, "Yesterday was…" She writes the second sentence down on the paper and puts a blank line at its end. "What date was yesterday?" she asks Carlos.

Without answering the question, Carlos writes down the answer, "Yesterday was September 26, 2013." Mrs. Joy compliments, "Good job!" Then, she says another sentence, "Tomorrow will be…" Carlos answers softly, "September 28, 2013." Mrs. Joy nods. Carlos writes down the sentence. When he is done, Mrs. Joy asks Carlos to read the three sentences again. Carlos softly reads his own handwriting.

Mrs. Joy compliments Carlos about doing a good job. Next, she shows Carlos the school's lunch menu, which consists of pictures and words in English and Spanish. Mrs. Joy tells Carlos, "This is the menu. What would you like for lunch?" Carlos looks at the menu and points to ham and cheeseburger hoagies. Mrs. Joy asks Carlos to copy down the sentence, "For lunch, I want ham and cheeseburger hoagies."

Mrs. Joy offers Carlos a piece of paper and asks him to write an essay in Spanish about his favorite activity. While Carlos is working, Mrs. Joy and I move to the sofa. I ask her why she began with teaching him dates and the menu. She smiles and replies, "It is because they are what Carlos needs to [know] most. He needs to be able

to tell [the] date and time in English, and he needs to be able to tell what he wants for lunch. These are his basic needs."

When Carlos finishes, Mrs. Joy takes his writing to the school secretary. Carlos and I also accompany her to the principal's office. Mrs. Joy asks the school secretary to translate his writing from Spanish to English. When we come back to the class, Mrs. Joy walks Carlos back to his regular classroom. She reiterates to Carlos that he is to come back again at 11.00 a.m. He nods with understanding.

Making the most of scripted curriculum. Mrs. Joy and I walk into the school building to get Javier and the first graders. When Ms. Joy opens the door, the students pop out of their classrooms like popcorn and line up in the hallway. When the students talk nosily, Mrs. Joy says, "Bubble in your mouth." All students are quiet immediately. I think to myself, "This is a very good and easy to understand instruction."

After the students are quiet, Mrs. Joy introduces me to them, "This is Mr. Denchai. Can you show Mr. Denchai good behaviors?" All voices respond, "Yes!" Mrs. Joy smiles and says, "Let's walk to our class." The students walk quietly and when they arrive in the classroom they sit on the carpet on butterfly stickers, which Mrs. Joy uses as seat place markers.

After the students sit properly, Mrs. Joy draws a 2 x 2 table on the small whiteboard; one column is for the teacher and the other is for the students. She then takes advantage of a teachable moment by adding "s" to "teacher", and asks the students why she has done so. The students say, "Because we have many teachers." Mrs. Joy smiles.

After that, she starts the class with a name learning activity. Mrs. Joy uses a stick to point to a student who then stands up. Next she asks, "What's your name?" The student tells the class, "I'm Mariana." Mrs. Joy continues, "This is Mariana. What's her name?" All voices reply, "Mariana." Mrs. Joy goes on, "What do you say?" The students respond, "Good morning, Mariana." Then Mariana says, "Good morning."

Mrs. Joy calls on each student one by one. While observing this activity, I think she may have chosen it so I can know the students' names. She first calls on the students who are able to communicate to model the task for Javier, then she gives him a turn and he performs the task. I think Mrs. Joy does this activity regularly, so the students understand her expectations.

After this introduction, Mrs. Joy picks up a curriculum. All of the students become excited. Mrs. Joy raises her right hand up, parallel to her shoulders to signal for the students to stay still. Then she says, "Standing up. Get ready?" Mrs. Joy pauses and flips her hand over. The students stand up. She asks, "What are you doing?" They respond, "I'm standing up." Mrs. Joy continues, "Sitting down. Ready?" Mrs. Joy flips her hand again to signal. All students sit down. "What are you doing?" Mrs. Joy asks. "I am sitting down," all voices answer.

Mrs. Joy continues using other signals to symbolize actions for the students to try, such as touching their heads, knees, and shoulders. When the students follow the instructions correctly, she gives them a star on a 2 x 2 table. When they are unable to follow instructions she adds a star to the teacher's side of the table.

While doing this activity, a student sees a shadow on the roof. He is curious about what it is, so he asks Mrs. Joy, "What is that?" Mrs. Joy pauses the lesson and talks about the shadow. She uses this teachable

moment to engage the students in conversation. The students are excited to learn a new word, "shadow." After explaining about the shadow, Ms. Joy calls individual students one by one to sit at desks. Javier is the first person to be called. He understands what he is supposed to do, perhaps because he has done this for a long time. Mrs. Joy asks Javier to pass folders to his classmates by pointing to a pile of folders. He understands this instruction and walks to each table and lets his peers select their own folders.

All of the students take out an incomplete task from their last session when they wrote about a place they went and who they went with. Today they are writing about what they did. Mrs. Joy asks the students individually what they did and writes down a unique sentence for each of them to copy. Then she asks the students to color their work. When the time is up, Mrs. Joy and I walk with the students to their classrooms. After dropping the students off, I say goodbye to her, drive back to my apartment, and expand my field notes immediately.

October

I drive to the Sunshine School to observe Mrs. Joy's classroom again. When I arrive, Mrs. Joy excitingly tells me that Carlos has improved his English. Mrs. Joy has been teaching him to write dates, days of the week, months, numbers, and lunch choices. Also, she has been asking him to write about himself in Spanish so the school secretary can translate Carlos' writing into English and Mrs. Joy can learn about his background.

I notice that Carlos is now more comfortable in class. When he arrives, he knows what he is supposed to do. He walks to the table at the back of the room, grabs his folder, takes out his paper, and writes dates and lunch choices. When I ask Mrs. Joy during the interview whether she has noticed improvement, she smiles and tells me that she is happy to see that Carlos is improving his English. Mrs. Joy reports that she has been creating routines for Carlos, but I think she is doing more than creating routines. Mrs. Joy is acculturating Carlos into the U.S. classroom culture.

Acculturating students into classroom culture. When Carlos comes to Mrs. Joy's classroom she greets him with, "How are you doing?" Carlos replies, "Good." "Can you say 'Good morning' to Mr. Denchai?" asks Mrs. Joy. Reluctantly, Carlos finally says, "Good morning." I say back to Carlos, "Good morning."

He walks to get his folder at the shelf, where Mrs. Joy normally puts his work. Carlos starts writing dates and lunch choices. While doing the task, he does not know how to spell "October." He walks to the bulletin board where there is an envelope of vocabulary cards he and Mrs. Joy created together. He pulls out the cards and picks the one that says "October." Carlos copies the word down in his paper.

Mrs. Joy sees Carlos finish his writing, and tells me that yesterday was Carlos' birthday. I say, "Happy birthday." He smiles and points to a date on the planner and says something that I do not understand. Mrs. Joy asks him, "Your brother's birthday?" Carlos says, "Yes." Mrs. Joy and I are surprised about the new information that we have just learned.

After Carlos finishes writing his sentences, Mrs. Joy asks him, "Do you want to write about your birthday? Yesterday was…" Carlos nods and begins to write. As he writes, he stops at the word "birthday." When Mrs. Joy sees Carlos struggling, she jumps in and asks, "How to spell 'birthday'?" "I don't know," replies

Carlos. Mrs. Joy says, "Go get the dictionary." Carlos walks to the shelf and picks up the black picture dictionary. He flips through the dictionary to find the word "birthday." Mrs. Joy helps Carlos find the picture of a birthday party scene. Mrs. Joy shows the dictionary to Carlos and asks, "Can you see the word 'birthday'?" Carlos looks for the word, but he does not see it. He stares at the page.

"What sound does it make /b/?" asks Mrs. Joy. Carlos says something softly. I cannot hear him clearly. Mrs. Joy asks me to write the sound of /b/. I write the letter "b" on a piece of paper. Carlos looks at the alphabet and scans for the word. He finally sees the word "birthday" in the dictionary. He points to the word. Mrs. Joy says, "Good job."

Carlos copies the word "birthday" on his paper. After Carlos finishes, Mrs. Joy asks, "What did you have yesterday?" Carlos stares up the ceiling to process the question. I help him out by gesturing and asking another question, "What did you eat yesterday?" He tries to describe what he ate yesterday, but he cannot remember the word. Mrs. Joy tells him, "You had cupcakes." "Cupcakes," Carlos repeats. Mrs. Joy then asks, "What color did you have?" Carlos says, "Blue."

Mrs. Joy pulls out a piece of paper that she and Carlos had worked on yesterday. On the paper, I see a drawing by Carlos of a human-like figure. Mrs. Joy asks, "What is this?" Carlos answers, "Piñata." She continues, "Can you tell Mr. Denchai what the piñata is?" Carlos smiles and shakes his head. Mrs. Joy elaborates, "It is a Mexican tradition. You will hang the piñata on the ceiling and inside you will have lots of candies. You will be blindfolded and try to hit the piñata. If you can hit it, the candies will drop." As Mrs. Joy shares the definition of a piñata with me, Carlos smiles and acts out how to break a piñata.

Scripted curriculum versus teachable moments. Mrs. Joy puts the butterfly stickers on the floor to prepare for the arrival of the first graders. We go to the school building to get the students. When all of the students come out of the room, she asks them to line up, alternating boys and girls. The students are now noisy, so she reminds them, "Remember the rules? Bubble in your mouth. When you are outside, you can talk. When you are at the stairs, put the bubbles back in your mouths." All students are quiet and start walking silently to the classroom. When the students arrive, they sit on the butterfly stickers.

Excitingly, one of the students asks Mrs. Joy, "Can we do roller coaster today?" Mrs. Joy responds, "Sure." The students giggle with pleasure. Mrs. Joy counts, "One, two, three." All of the students are pretending they are on a roller coaster and making roller coaster sounds. Mrs. Joy acts along with the students. After this activity, Mrs. Joy checks the students' readiness for the next activity. She moves a boy to sit next to a girl. One of the students yells, "They are cousins!"

Mrs. Joy asks the class, "Besides cousins, who else do we have in a family?" The students raise their hands for a chance to respond. Mrs. Joy calls on a student by name to answer and they take a few moments to talk about family. Mrs. Joy then starts a lesson with the actions of standing up and sitting down, which she calls on individual students to do. After that, she reviews vocabulary about objects such as a dog, a tree, a shoe, and a cat. She shows each of the words and asks the students to identify them. "What is this?" she asks, and the students reply in unison.

After reviewing, Mrs. Joy starts a new lesson by having students look at a picture. The picture consists of three cats hiding in a cabinet. Mrs. Joy says, "This is a cabinet." She pauses and continues, "What is this?" Students reply simultaneously, "A cabinet." Mrs. Joy continues, "Listen, you are going to figure out a problem about a cat and a cabinet. Listen to the rule: the cat on the cabinet is small." Mrs. Joy points to the picture and says, "Everybody, say the rule." She gives the students signal to respond and all voices say, "The cat on the cabinet is small." She emphasizes, "Remember, only one of these cats is small. Which cat is that?" She signals the students again and they say, "The cat on the cabinet."

Mrs. Joy continues, "We're going to talk about each cat." She points to a cat behind the cabinet and asks, "Is this cat small?" The students answer, "No." Mrs. Joy says, "So what do you know about this cat?" The children respond, "It is not small." Mrs. Joy repeats this questioning as she points to different cats in the picture and asks whether each cat is small or not. She questions the students individually until all students respond firmly. Finally, she points to the cat on the cabinet and asks the group, "Is this cat on the cabinet?" The students respond, "Yes." "So what do you know about this cat?" she asks. The students reply, "It is small." Mrs. Joy turns to the next page and says, "Let's see if you're right." She animatedly flips the page as the students wait to see whether they are right or not. After Mrs. Joy opens the page, they burst out laughing because they are correct.

November

Mrs. Joy has been creating routines and acculturating Carlos and Javier into the U.S. classrooms. She uses the scripted curriculum, but more importantly, she capitalizes on "teachable moments." Mrs. Joy tells me teachable moments engage students in the lessons because these moments are about what the children want to learn. By employing this practice of engagement, the students' English proficiency has improved drastically.

As I walk to the portable classroom, I hear a boy say, "Hi." I look around in search of the source, and find Carlos smiling at me. I am impressed that he has picked up social and oral language quickly. As an English language learner myself, I think initiating conversation is a challenge to learn, but Carlos has done it quickly, in only two months!

Students' experience as epistemology. After the school morning ritual ends, two students come in. Mrs. Joy informs them that they will have a new friend today named José. A student asks, "Is he a boy or a girl?" Mrs. Joy smiles and asks him back, "When we say 'he' what…?" "Oh, I know he is a boy," the student replies immediately. The student turns his face to me and says, "Mr. Denchai is a man because he is old, and he is a boy because he is young." I cannot help but laugh at the student's comparison, and Mrs. Joy sees a teachable opportunity and asks, "What is the opposite of old?" "Young," the two students reply simultaneously.

José walks into the class with a student. He looks scared and confused and sits in a chair. Mrs. Joy tells him that she speaks a little Spanish. While Mrs. Joy is waiting for other students, she introduces José to two students from Somalia. One of them asks, "Does he speak English?" Ms. Joy replies, "You can ask him." The student turns and asks him, but José does not respond. Other students walk into the classroom. When a group has arrived, the student tells them, "We have a new student

today. Can somebody ask him his last name?" The students seem excited to meet their new friend.

When all of the students take their seats, one of the students says, "We all speak Spanish, and Mrs. Joy is learning Spanish." I giggle. Mrs. Joy lets the students talk to each other, and she observes them closely. One student asks, "What's his nickname?" Another student steps into the role of English/Spanish translator. He asks José the question in Spanish, and translates the answer back to English to share with the questioner. After that, many questions arise; for example, How did he come here? Why did he come? Who did he come with? The helpful student does a good job of translating questions and answers and reporting them to the class. More questions come up because these students are curious about their friends. Mrs. Joy facilitates this question time as needed.

When two more girls arrive, Mrs. Joy stops the "interrogation" with, "Okay, everyone. All questions are great. I have a great idea." Many students are still talking while Ms. Joy is talking, so one of the students says, "I can't hear myself." Mrs. Joy addresses the whole class, "How can we fix that?" All of the students reply simultaneously, "Raise your hand!" One of the students asks Mrs. Joy, "Can I tell José about that?" As an observer, I can see that the help of students who speak the same language as José could be useful to Mrs. Joy.

Mrs. Joy starts the class by asking, "How many boys do we have?" All of the children start to count, so the class becomes noisy with voices again. One of the students yells, "Raise your hand." José also says, "Raise your hand." Mrs. Joy stops talking until the class is ready. She drops the lesson that she had planned to teach and introduces a new learning activity. Since the students have fun asking questions, she wants her students to create a timeline, "A story of my life." She gives an example of her own life followed by, "Think about where you live and events; true events, not fake. Okay?" The students start working. I walk around and help them.

Ethnography that breaks our hearts. Mrs. Joy is talking to Carlos at the table as I push the classroom door open. Carlos is staring at his feet, his face down. "You look sad today, Carlos. Do you want to tell me what happened?" asks Mrs. Joy. Carlos looks up at Mrs. Joy and then turns his sad face down again. His eyes are blankly staring off and appear dark – not the typical eyes of an eleven-year-old boy at all. He is rubbing his hands in frustration.

Mrs. Joy communicates with me through a glance; she is concerned about him. She wants to understand why Carlos is not energetic and eager to learn as he has been in the past. Two months ago, Carlos started to like school and he wanted to learn English. When he first came to school, he did not understand any English. He picked up the language quickly and now understands and can say simple words. Mrs. Joy enjoys spending time with him and is rewarded every time Carlos starts to say something in English.

Mrs. Joy whispers, "I have never seen Carlos so unenthusiastic about school. I am really worried about him. I wonder if there is something going on with him or his family? Should I ask Brian to talk to him about this?" I agree with Mrs. Joy that she should find out what is happening with Carlos. Mrs. Joy asks to speak with Mr. Brian. I walk to join Carlos at the table. "I can help," says Mr. Brian.

Mrs. Joy and Mr. Brian join Carlos and me at the table. Mr. Brian speaks in Spanish to Carlos. His voice sounds comforting and he smiles as he speaks. I do not understand Spanish, but I try to smile and pay attention to their interactions. Carlos stares at his feet as he listens to Mr. Brian. When Mr. Brian is finished, Carlos looks up and then stares his feet again. "It's okay to tell me," Mr. Brian confirms.

Carlos looks up and says in Spanish, *"Voy a mi tierra, Mexico, la próxima semana."* He looks down again. Mr. Brian is silent for a while. He turns to us and says, "He said he will go back to Mexico next week."

Mrs. Joy and I look at each other, SHOCKED.

Two months of investing energy and time to help him…

Two months of seeing his language improvement…

Now, he has to go back home.

Conclusion

In this study, I investigated the journey of an elementary-school ESL teacher and her process of teaching emergent bilinguals. As presented in the findings, the journey of teaching emergent bilinguals is complicated, developmental, demands flexibility, and is time-consuming. Similar to prior studies, these findings show it is challenging to educate emergent bilinguals who arrive at U.S. schools unacquainted with English (Khong & Saito, 2014).

Mrs. Joy expended energy and effort to teach Carlos. She tailored her teaching based on his needs. Mrs. Joy created a non-threatening and supportive learning environment for Carlos. She made the most of the scripted curriculum required by the district. Mrs. Joy regarded the use of scripted curriculum as important, but she did not use it in the initial stages of their teacher/student relationship. When she used the scripted curriculum, she improvised learning tasks, and identified and expanded teachable moments to accelerate the students' language development.

Additionally, she tried to learn about students' backgrounds, using resources such as information shared by the school secretary and conversation born of other students' curiosity. Furthermore, Mrs. Joy created peer-support work groups by purposefully combining emergent bilinguals who spoke the same language and had different levels of English proficiency. This relieved academic and social pressure and stress for the children. Based on my observations of her teaching practices, I have chosen the term *improvisational teaching* to describe how Mrs. Joy educates emergent bilinguals.

Improvisational teaching was conceptualized using the critical constructivist perspective (Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, & Cain, 1998). Holland et al. (1998) argued that improvisation is impromptu action in response to a particular situation, driven by immediate contexts and past experiences. Improvisation is the space within cultural practices that affords the potential for new identities (Holland et al., 1998). Framed by Holland et al.'s (1998) notion of improvisation, in this study I observed improvisational teaching as immediate decisions made by Mrs. Joy while teaching emergent bilinguals how to master skills, gain knowledge, and adopt attitudes which they urgently needed. Each decision was based on its context and required her ability to assess the students' learning as well as reflect on available materials and resources. Her improvisational teaching was not

unplanned or unprepared; instead, she was prepared for the unexpected and understood how improvisation helped the students. Mrs. Joy's improvisational teaching practices highly advocated the students' learning and survival.

It should be noted that improvisational teaching does not simply mean making connections (Graue, Whyte, & Karabon, 2015). Mrs. Joy used the strategy of making connections as her initial stage of improvisational teaching. She personalized teaching by paying attention to the lives of emergent bilinguals (Cloud, Lakin, & Leininger, 2011). Also, improvisational teaching is not the opposite of scripted instruction, but rather scripted instruction is a space where improvisation may take place. Mrs. Joy often improvised her teaching within the scripted instruction. Furthermore, improvisational teaching requires teachers to have in-depth subject matter knowledge, and knowledge about students' funds of knowledge in order to respond creatively particular situations (Graue et al., 2015; Sawyer, 2004).

Improvisational teaching practices may be useful for educators who have emergent bilinguals in their classrooms. Teachers should be aware that these students have unique needs which require a flexible teaching style and improvisational plans for their education. Teacher educators should consider how to build capacity in student teachers for the use of improvisational teaching practices in classrooms. Questions regarding how to best prepare prospective teachers to integrate and utilize improvisational teaching practices warrant further research exploration.

Notes

1. All names are pseudonyms created by the participants.
2. This section is a cumulative portrait of the Sunshine School in which I conducted "spatial mapping" to identify the school ritual (Heath & Street, 2008, p. 59) using data from field notes taken over a period of four months. I intentionally chose an ethnographic present writing style (present tense) in this section because I wanted readers to feel engaged.

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